

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Interest in differing linguistic behavior of women and men has been considerable in recent years. Male and female speech has been observed to differ in their form, topic, content, and use. Haas (1979) claims that women's language differ than men's in some ways. "Women are often more polite, expressive, supportive, talk more about family and home, and use more words reflecting feeling, evaluation, interpretation, and psychological state" (as cited in Psychological Bulletin, 1979). 'Woman's language' has as foundation the attitude that women are marginal to the serious concerns of life, which are pre-empted by men. The marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of (Lakoff, 1973). Lakoff argues that women language style reflects and contributes to the oppressed role of women in a patriarchal world. One example of women's speech is the use of tag questions at the end of a statement. Tag questions offer the speaker a way to make an assertion without committing herself to its truthfulness. Tag questions allow the listener to disagree without attacking the speaker directly, as the speaker does not appear to be completely convinced of the statement anyway (Lakoff 1973:54).

The dominance approach to sex differences in speech is concerned with the imbalance of power between the sexes. Powerless speech features used by

women help contribute to maintaining a subordinate position in society; while conversely, men's dominance is preserved through their linguistic behavior.

According to Lakoff, hedging and boosting modifiers show a women's lack of power in a mixed-sex interaction. While the hedges' lack of assertiveness is apparent, boosters, she claims, intensify the force of a statement with the assumption that a women would not be taken seriously otherwise. For Lakoff, there is a great concordance between femininity and unassertive speech she defines as „women's speech.“ According to her, in a male-dominated society women are pressured to show the feminine qualities of weakness and subordination toward men.

Representation of women speech can be seen in various forms of media. Women's speech appears in spoken form such as in TV series, movies, or soap operas while in written form it can be seen in novels, play, books, etc. While women speech can be seen in all forms of media, a play appears to reflect authentic language use and constructed of perception and assumption about women's speech patterns. A play dialogues can be used to illustrate the assumptions about gendered language use. Ten women's language features theory which proposed by Robin Lakoff (1975) was used to analyze the women language features. Those ten features are lexical hedges or fillers, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, precise color terms, intensifiers, hypercorrect grammar, super polite forms, avoidance of strong swear words, and emphatic stress.

One of fascinating plays that may reflect women's language usage in its story is *A Streetcar Named Desire*. It is a play which was written in 1947 by American playwright Tennessee Williams. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and New York Drama Critics' Circle Best Play a year after the play premiered. Since the main characters are women, the two main women characters; Blanche and Stella are interesting to be analyzed.

There were several studies covering the issue of women's language carried out by some scholars. Most of these scholars' studies support Lakoff's theory. Earlier, Mulyaningtyas (2004) support Lakoff's theory in *A Study of Women Linguistic Features Found in the Dialogue of Gilmore Girls TV Series*. The study revealed that there are nine out of ten features exist. Rosita (2008) did a study about women language features used by the main characters in *Sex and The City* movie. The study entitled *Women Language Features used in Sex and The City* found that there are nine out of ten women language features occurs in the dialogue. Hypercorrect grammar did not occur in the dialogue of the movie. This study has proven Lakoff's theory that women use women language features more often than male. Besides, Lambertz (2011) studied about representations of women's language in German and Australian soap operas. The study entitled *Women's Language in Soap Opera: Comparing Features of Female Speech in Australia and Germany* concerned about tentativeness in women's language and the influence of media role models on reproducing gender stereotypes. The result of the study shows that women language features can be identified in both cultural contexts. In her thesis

entitled *An Analysis of Women Language Features in Legally Blonde I*, Savitri (2012) found nine out of ten features occurred in the dialogue. Nine women language features occurred except precise color terms. Most women characters in that movie used women language features. The finding of her study support Lakoff's theory of women language features. Meanwhile, in her thesis entitled *Women Language Features Used by Indonesian Female Bloggers*, Pebrianti (2013) investigated women language features, the frequency of the features, and the possible reasons of using the features by Indonesian Female Bloggers. This study adopted only nine women language features and did not apply rising intonation on declaratives. The findings reveal that there were eight out of nine women language features used by the female bloggers. This study also supports the theory of women language features proposed by Lakoff. Kartika (2015) in her study *Women Linguistic Features Used by Oprah Winfrey in Same-Sex and Cross-Sex Communication* also support Lakoff's theory. The finding shows that there are six women linguistic features which exists in the same-sex communication while in cross-sex communication, there are six women linguistic features which emerged.

Although the studies above discussed about Lakoff's women language features, the source of data they use are different. Mulyaningtyas (2004) used the dialogue in the TV series while Rosita (2008) and Savitri (2012) used the dialogue in the movie. Meanwhile, Lambertz (2011) used soap opera, Pebrianti (2013) used female blogger's posts, and Kartika (2015) used talk

show dialogue as the object of the study. The previous studies were commonly discussing women language features in context of movie, soap opera or talk show. There were no discussions about women language features in literary works such as a play before.

This study aims to investigate about women language features in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This study is expected to give more information and new knowledge to the reader about women's linguistics features through an interesting object. This study can become a reference for linguistics student, to learn more about women's linguistics features used in this play. This study is conducted to become a reference for scriptwriter or playwright so that they can notice and use women's language features in their work properly to distinguish women character from men.

I'm working on this study which is about women's language features in *A Streetcar Named Desire* play because I want to find out what features are used by the character and to validate Lakoff's theory of ten women's language features used in that play. None of the studies above takes a play as the object of the study. Therefore, this study is conducted with a play as its object of the study. The aim of this study is to find out what are the women language features found in *A Streetcar Named Desire* play and the dominant use of women language features. Besides, this will explore Lakoff's theoretical assumption about women language features whether it is applicable or not.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

In relation to the background of the study, there are two main problems to find out:

- What women's language features are used by Blanche and Stella in the dialogue of *A Streetcar Named Desire* play?
- Which feature is dominantly used by Blanche and Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire* play?

1.3 Objective of the Study

In line with the statements of the problem, this study tries to attain the following objectives:

- To find out the types of women language features used by Blanche and Stella in the dialogue of *A Streetcar Named Desire* play.
- To find out the type of women language feature that is dominantly used by Blanche and Stella in the dialogue of *A Streetcar Named Desire* play.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is done to find out women's linguistics features of the main characters; Blanche and Stella in a play entitled *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Theoretically, this study is expected to give more information and new knowledge to the readers about women's linguistics features through an interesting object. This study may become a reference for particularly

linguistics students, to learn more about women's linguistics features used in this play. Practically, this study is conducted to become a reference for scriptwriter or playwright to notice and use women's language features in their work to distinguish women character from men. Besides, the finding of this study may help the reader understand deeper about Lakoff's theory about women language features.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

1. **Language and gender:** the relation between gender and language use which involves a clear discussion of gender and of the resource that the linguistic system offers for the construction of social meaning. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003)
2. **Women Language Features:** several language features that specifically indicate the characteristics of women language and show difference of language usage between men and women.
 - a. **Lexical Hedge or Filler:** linguistic forms which express the speaker's certainty or uncertainty about a proposition.
 - b. **Tag Question:** linguistic forms associated with tentativeness and it can decrease the strength of assertion. It is usually used in the end of a sentence to ask confirmation from addressee.
 - c. **Intensifier:** linguistic form which is used to intensify or to strengthen the meaning of an utterance.

- d. **Hypercorrect grammar:** the use of grammar which goes beyond the norm, it involves extending a form beyond the standard.
 - e. **Empty Adjective:** adjective which only convey emotional feeling rather than specific information.
 - f. **Superpolite Form:** a kind of request and other sort of utterance with excessively polite forms.
 - g. **Avoidance of strong swear word:** the use of particular word to soften strong swear words.
 - h. **Precise color terms:** the way a speaker mentions color in specified or specialised terms.
 - i. **Rising intonation on declarative:** the raise of pitch in the end of sentence which results question-like intonation pattern.
 - j. **Emphatic Stress:** the use of stress in particular word to emphasize or to strengthen the meaning of an utterance.
3. **Play:** a written work in which the story is told through speech and action that is intended to be acted out on stage (Merriam-Webster dictionary)